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Enric Bas

Sharing and Collaborative Economy

Future Scenarios, Technology, Creativity and
Social Innovation



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Ana, meu fofinha, já te disse que te amo?

Preface

Oh, I get by with a little help from my friends
Mm, gonna try with a little help from my friends
Oh, I get high with a little help from my friends
Yes, I get by with a little help from my friends
With a little help from my friends
(Lennon & McCartney, 1967)

After decades of exaltation of the individual, it seems that now we are living in a good time for the collective: we are linked (or tight, or even maybe chained) to each other by social networks, in a global world where digital ubiquity and total availability—24/7—are the norm. You must be connected if you do not want to become an outsider and being left aside. It is like that old Nokia’s ad slogan of the 1990s “connecting people” which has become universal, total, and mandatory. Nowadays, people love to feel themselves being part of something collective (even virtual, even fake), sharing pieces of their lives—even daily, like a showcase diary—with others. Using co-working spaces instead of private boxes is cool. Also, it is sharing a car instead of owning one, and giving a second life to a secondhand jacket in the name of sustainability and the collective survival, instead of buying a new one (which certainly could dynamize economy even more). Ecosystem seems to be the dominant reference now, as part of the *Zeitgeist*, even ahead of economy, technology, or politics. So, to be cool you must co-work, cocreate, collaborate, and participate in collective processes, all the time. This is the contemporary mantra, and individuality has become an old-fashioned concept if not a sin.

But, although it is certainly a book about the potentialities and benefits of co-creation and the possibilities that collaborative work offers, this is not a plea against individuality. Quite the contrary, and after considering various drivers and scenarios, it has been concluded that it is not possible—from a philosophical and conceptual point of view—to develop a true sharing and collaborative economy if it is not based on individual initiative. This could sound paradoxical, since a communal character is always ascribed to it, but without private initiative, private property, free choice, meritocracy, division of labor, and market segmentation (the bases of

liberal capitalism), the sharing and collaborative economy would be nothing more than a Frankenstein—a living dead, artificially created—in the hands of the state.

Would The Beatles, one of the references of co-creation in popular culture, have been possible without the talent (diverse and unique) and the individual contributions of its members? I do not think so. Things are more enjoyable, and perhaps even better, with the help of friends, as they sang in 1967, but the individual initiative, which is always free, is key in the collective process. That of yourself, and that of each of your friends. It was also in 1967 when Bertrand de Jouvenel published *The Art of Conjecture*, one of the most relevant references in futures literature. A conjecture is a judgment or opinion formed from indications or incomplete or supposed data. It is, let us say, a well-founded subjective assessment: it has an objective component, based on data and observations, but it is still a free interpretation: the ultimate result of a creative process that can only be ascribed to its author. This is the main treasure of our species: that, being part of a collective that gives meaning to its existence, each member is magically unique. Like creativity, which is unique ... and free.

This book is dedicated to my wife, Ana, to my mums, Toti and Lilian, and to my beautiful little niece Maria Antonia—four unique and free women who, from their individuality, generate that feeling of community that gives meaning to life and that we call family.

San Vicente del Raspeig, Alicante, Spain

Enric Bas

Highlights

- The ubiquitous nature of digitalization will radically determine the “new economy.”
- The core issue in social innovation is not technology, but the social fabric, i.e., people.
- Policymaking concerning regulatory means (free market, fair trade, etc.) tends to be controversial.
- It is necessary to move from top-down to bottom-up (open) innovation policies.
- The new economy relies on empathy: sharing, collaboration, and participation of individuals.
- *Sharing and Collaborative Economy* is based on free choice and individual initiative.

About This Book

This book provides a foresight-based exploratory analysis on the coming post-capitalist society and the transforming role played by technology, creativity, and social innovation in the new economy. The shared and collaborative economy (henceforth referred to as ShE) is here essentially understood just as proof of the current *Zeitgeist*: a sign of its time. A time, a reality—the “liquid modernity,” according to Bauman—where the formal social structures and institutions (not only the entities but also the identities) which have traditionally shaped and framed human societies are—slowly but inevitably—becoming “dissolved” into a new emerging social system of a complex and mutant nature. This leads to a challenging time for companies, governments, and individuals which entails as many risks and opportunities.

The Horizon Scanning process to identify drivers likely to affect the ShE on the 2030 horizon—along with the subsequent future scenarios design—was developed by the author himself, in his capacity as research director responsible for its Foresight section, on the basis of “Open-DOORS” (Designing a network of cooperative creative communities to develop a sharing economy): a 2015-18 Interreg European Commission Project committed with stimulating both the proactive new economy and participatory/open social innovation initiatives within the Mediterranean area. This prior/previous work was later completed with the author’s individual research on breakthrough technologies and lifestyles carried out during his stay (academic year 2020/21) as Visiting Professor at CLICCS Cluster of Excellence on Climate Change and Society, led by the UHH University of Hamburg and the Max Planck Institute.

Those outcomes, together with the preliminary and extensive futures research work performed by FUTURLAB during the last 20 years (mainly on megatrends, weak signals, and wild cards concerning technology, economy, society, ecosystem, politics, and culture), have defined the context to undertake this exploratory exercise where three plausible scenarios for ShE are considered by the author on the 2030 horizon: the probable future (“Balancing neoliberalism: the shared/collaborative economy as a new third way”); the contingent/rupturist future (“Hypercapitalism:

neoliberalism on steroids, or the collaborative paradigm as a Trojan horse”); and the preferable future (“Post-capitalism, or sharing economy as the poster child of the Fourth Industrial Revolution”). This distribution was made according to a change of paradigm where horizontal management, cultural diversity, social responsibility, climate change management, and the transformative power of radical creativity and participation have finally assumed a leading/key role in the design of brand-new as well as more integrative and sustainable ways to approaching business and economy.

Reference

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About the Author

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